

The growing Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter to host 10th anniversary celebration and STEM Award presentation at L3Harris; tickets and sponsorships

By Ken Datzman

The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter, an affiliate of the Arlington, Virginia-based National Defense Industrial Association, will be marking its 10th anniversary celebration and STEM Award presentation in early 2023.

The local organization was founded on Jan. 21, 2013, and has worked to promote STEM and STEAM education for girls on the Space Coast. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, while STEAM includes the arts. Karen Gregory was the founding chapter president.

The chapter works to cultivate and support the advancement and recognition of women in all aspects of national security through networking and educational events with local businesses and defense professionals in the community.

"We are thrilled to be putting on the awards event for the 10th year," said businesswoman Inga Young, president of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter, and president and founder of 8-koi, a government contracting procurement firm in Melbourne.

"The events we host help raise money for the scholarships that we award annually to area students. Since the chapter's inception in 2013, we have awarded more than \$76,000 in scholarships, including \$16,000 last year."

Scholarship awards are based on academic achievement, field of study, work experience, statement of interests, recommendations, and financial need.

The STEM Award event and chapter celebration was originally set for Jan. 23 at L3Harris Global Innovation Center on the corporate campus in Melbourne, but because of a construction project there, the event has been reset.

"We are currently planning to have the event on Thursday, Feb. 2, at L3Harris," said Young. "The event date will be finalized soon, and it will be posted on our website."

She added that the program will begin at 5:30 p.m. and is open to the public.

At the event, two awards will be announced: the STEM Innovator of the Year and the STEM Educator of the Year. The STEM Innovator Award will be presented to someone from industry and the latter honor will go to an area educator.

Young, who herself was once selected STEM Innovator of the Year, said applications are still being accepted for the awards. The application is on <http://scwid.org>. "We prefer that people make application on the website rather than mailing it," she said.

Brevard County District 1 Commis-

sioner Rita Pritchett of Titusville will be attending and recognizing the 10th anniversary of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter with a proclamation, said Young. "We're proud of that recognition."

Tickets to attend the celebration and presentation are \$25 for members of Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter and \$35 for guests.

Tickets are sold at <http://scwid.org>. There are also sponsorship opportunities for businesses and individuals to support the program and the local chapter, said Young.

Sponsorships range from \$100 to \$3,000. And they come with various amenities at each of the six levels of support. For example, the \$1,500 Gold Sponsor will have their company logo displayed in the event program and will receive other promotional benefits, including complimentary tickets to the event.

To inquire about being a sponsor for the anniversary program, email sponsorships@scwid.org.

"This event presents a good opportunity for businesses to show their support for a nonprofit organization that is doing a lot of great things in the community, including raising money for scholarships, seeing their members serve as mentors, and helping young women pursue careers in the STEM and STEAM disciplines, and much more," said Gail Hart, a volunteer board member of Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter who handles communications for the organization.

Hart is manager of marketing and communications for Acuity International in Cape Canaveral, a professional services' company. Her office provides workforce medical services.

The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is also accepting items for its silent auction at the event. "The silent auction is one of our largest and most successful money makers for the year," said Young.

Suggestions to consider for donating to the auction include gift certificates, fully assembled gift baskets, homemade items, sport-related merchandise, spa packages, wine and cheese baskets, and golf items.

To raise money for scholarships, the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is also selling "fashion scarves" made of silk fabric on its website. They are \$25 each.

Membership in the organization is open to both women and men, said Hart. "A lot of people may not know that, but we do have members who are men and they are not in the defense industry," added Young. "These typically are businesspeople — lawyers, bankers, real-estate agents, and other professionals. We appreciate



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Businesswoman Inga Young, right, is president of the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter. Gail Hart is a board member of the organization. Young is president and founder of fast-growing 8-koi, a government contracting procurement firm. Hart is manager of marketing and communications for Acuity International in Cape Canaveral. They are gearing up for their organization's 10th anniversary and STEM Award presentation set for L3Harris in Melbourne in early 2023. The event is open to the public. They are at 8-koi's new corporate headquarters in Suntree.

membership from anyone who supports our organization's mission, which is to strengthen women who work in the defense industry."

Membership in the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is growing. The organization has roughly 87 members. "My goal for the organization the prior year was to have a 10 percent increase in members, and we reached that goal," said Young.

"I believe that in the last couple of years, awareness of Women in Defense Space Coast has risen because of the work we do in the community," said Hart. "We have been gaining some new members and we have had some people renew whose membership had lapsed."

She added, "I became a member about five years ago. What really attracted me is the organization's commitment of giving back to the community, paying it forward, and the sharp focus on STEM and STEAM education. Helping to promote women in these fields is important for the workforce of the future."

Researchers say building up a girl's confidence early is one of the main ways to help girls succeed in STEM education. Exposure to STEM education has to remain consistent throughout elementary, middle, and high school.

"Studies have shown that girls need to

Please see Women in Defense, page 21

Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter

Continued from page 13

become interested in science and mathematics at a young age — when they start to absorb content and show no fear of the subjects — in order for them to go on and pursue the STEM and STEAM disciplines in college,” said Young. “The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is involved in that effort.”

Early in elementary school, many children believe that boys are more interested than girls in computer science and engineering. That stereotype can impact a girl’s willingness to participate in STEM classes and activities, and even affect career choices later.

That’s the finding of a recently released study from researchers at the University of Houston and the University of Washington, who surveyed 2,500 students in grades 1 to 12 to learn about the stereotypes that children hold regarding boys’ and girls’ interest in STEM.

Despite early similarities between girls and boys in math and science achievement, by high school, boys are more likely than girls to take the standardized examinations most closely associated with the fields of engineering and computing.

The National Science Board’s 2021 “Elementary and Secondary STEM Education” report shows that the U.S. is trailing many of its global competitors in STEM education.

STEM skills are essential for many jobs, including in fast-growing, high-demand careers,” said Young.

Among the key statistics in the 2021 National Science Board report: The U.S. ranked 25 out of 37 countries in mathematical literacy, an important metric because a strong grasp of mathematics underlies most science and engineering endeavors.

Related statistics also show that U.S. mathematics scores have not improved “appreciably for a long time.” Student performance on standardized tests in mathematics has been stagnant for the last 13 years. In countries large and small, students are outperforming U.S. students in mathematics year after year. The report also revealed that results for science literacy are slightly better, with the U.S. earning a rank of 7 out of 37. The average science score also improved between 2008 and 2018.

“Lagging in STEM education typically leads to a shortage of technical talent in the workforce,” said Young. “That is one of the reasons the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter is out in the community pushing and promoting STEM education in order to build up the pipeline of talent for the workforce.”

Her company recruits and employs a range of people with technical backgrounds, including engineers. Young started her consulting business from her small single-story home near the Melbourne Orlando International Airport. After several years of working with her few employees in the home office, she leased a 1,400-square-foot facility in a professional building nearby.

Today, 8-koi employs 180 people. “Next year, our employment ranks will likely double, to 360 people,” said Young, a University of Florida accounting graduate. “We were on a team that bid a contract. The prime contractor notified us they had won.”

She added, “The proposed bid was \$595 million. Our company’s work will involve no less than 15 percent of the contract, which is roughly \$80 million. This work will be all over our network, nationwide.”

Her company recently purchased a two-story, 20,000-square-foot professional building at 2725 Center Place in Suntree. The building contains 16,000 square feet of office space and 4,000 square feet of high-bay warehouse space. 8-koi invested in a building renovation and moved into the facility.

“We own the building and put 20 percent down to make the purchase,” said Young. “That was our goal — to have

our own real estate as we continue to grow as a company. We worked with some really good lenders from Seacoast Bank and Truist to do the deal.”


“We were fortunate to have found this gem of a building in a convenient location. Karen D’Alberto and John Curri of Realty World Curri Properties listened to what we wanted and needed for our headquarters. They helped make our dream come true,” she added.

8-koi runs four divisions: Design Engineering, Construction, Technical and Administrative, and Health Care.

The number 8 in the company name “represents the cyclic nature systems. The koi fish represents embracing adversity through persistent focus on positive outcomes.”

Young and Hart are hoping for a “positive outcome” with a lot of community support for the STEM Award program and anniversary celebration.

“This is an important event and an important milestone for our organization,” said Young. “We are looking forward to showcasing the award winners and the Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter.”



6TH ANNUAL JAM FOR THE KIDS

CELEBRATING 36 YEARS OF THE SCHOOL'S OPENING

JANUARY 13, 2023 | HILTON RIALTO MELBOURNE

Please join us for a full day of fun and appreciation as we reconnect with old friends, make new friends, and support a great cause. Come support Space Coast Discovery on Friday, **January 13, 2023**. Have lunch with the kids at 11 a.m. and an evening of great food, music and entertainment beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the **Hilton Rialto: 200 Rialto Place in Melbourne**. Our check-in and reception will be located in the lobby of the Hilton Rialto.

| SPONSORSHIP LEVELS | |
|--|--|
| <p>TITLE SPONSOR: SOLD!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage throughout the event, website links for 1 year, social media and verbal recognition at the event Admission for 8 at our Thursday evening VIP & Celebrity Chef Challenge at Chef's Table Admission to Friday luncheon with celebrities and Space Coast Discovery students Admission to Friday night event Preferred seating - 24 seats Celebrity at your table | <p>PLATINUM: \$10,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage throughout the event, website links for 1 year, social media and verbal recognition at the event Admission for 2 at our Thursday evening VIP & Celebrity Chef Challenge at Chef's Table Admission to Friday luncheon with celebrities and Space Coast Discovery students Admission to Friday night event Preferred seating - 16 seats Celebrity at your table |
| <p>GOLD: \$5,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage throughout the event, website links for 1 year, and verbal recognition at the event Admission to Friday luncheon with celebrities and Space Coast Discovery students Admission to Friday night event Preferred seating - 8 seats | <p>SILVER: \$2,500</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage throughout the event, website links for 1 year, and verbal recognition at the event Admission to Friday luncheon with celebrities and Space Coast Discovery students Admission to Friday night event - 4 seats |

THREE EASY WAYS TO SPONSOR

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1</p> <p>By PayPal at the following link: www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/143919</p> | <p>2</p> <p>By Credit Card by calling: (321) 729-6858</p> | <p>3</p> <p>By check: Please respond by email to swithers@spacecoastdiscovery.org and we will arrange pick-up of your check.</p> |
|--|--|---|

SCHEDULE & INFORMATION

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Thursday, January 12, 2023 Chef's Table 7720 N Wickham Rd #120, Melbourne, FL</p> | <p>Private Reception - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Our Platinum Level and above sponsors are welcome to a private reception at Chef's Table. Our celebrities have also been encouraged to attend.</p> |
| <p>Friday, January 13, 2023 Space Coast Discovery 3790 Dairy Road, Melbourne, FL</p> | <p>Lunch - 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Join us for lunch with the kids and celebrities at Space Coast Discovery. This a great chance to see the amazing work being done with the funds raised at our event. Enjoy lunch and have some fun with the kids and celebrities. Feel free to bring a guest to learn about our school.</p> |
| <p>Friday, January 13, 2023 "Jam for the Kids" Rialto Hilton Wakefield Ballroom 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne, FL</p> | <p>Jam for the Kids - 6:00 p.m. to Midnight (ish) One of a kind evening featuring great food and a relaxing atmosphere. Nashville entertainment from the talented singer/songwriters we've grown to love. Chef Lee and friends will create a delicious masterpiece for dinner. Business casual attire.</p> <p>After party This party is for Platinum level and above sponsors and celebrities. Food and drinks to be provided.</p> |